



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

July 18, 2014

Letter to the Community,

A press release issued this week by PEER, a Washington D.C. based environmental advocacy group, who is working with the local group Malibu Unites, alleges the District is failing to take the most conservative steps regarding environmental questions at Malibu schools. We read the release with great interest and considered carefully that PEER's statements, claims and allegations indicate they want the public to believe the District is setting health standards and associated testing protocols, when in fact these are set by government agencies.

As I have said since we first learned of the environmental concerns, the health and safety of our staff and students are of the utmost importance. In order to ensure our schools are healthy and safe, we use the standards established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Toxic Substances and Control (DTSC); the District does not set these standards. We are following the EPA- and DTSC-approved testing and action plans and looking to levels of safety that these agencies follow.

Last fall when we learned that three employees reported they had been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, the District sought advice from the Department of Public Health, the EPA and the DTSC, initiating steps that led to the implementation of a thorough testing plan. From the outset, I stated honestly and publicly that we are not health or environmental health experts; we will rely on the expertise and advice of the EPA and DTSC.

It should be noted that the press release from PEER, the group that has most sharply criticized the District for lack of transparency, confirms that it secretly gathered samples from school buildings outside of the testing process that has been established and approved by government agencies.

Samples were apparently surreptitiously gathered over a month ago and test data was released in a manner that was most certainly designed to incite concerns. I do not dismiss individual or group rights to advocate for change, but to do so by scaring a community into believing that our District is hiding the truth and is indifferent to people's health is wrong.

At this time, I plan to continue implementing the comprehensive testing and cleaning plans reviewed and accepted by the EPA and DTSC, and we are continuing to develop contingency plans, should they be necessary. But as to expanded testing, I cannot allow PEER and Malibu Unites to force action that fully dismisses the authority and scientific expertise of the government agencies. These agencies are fully aware that PCBs were used in caulk in many, many public buildings built between the years of 1950-1979. The EPA has consistently urged that our testing plan determine whether there are harmful routes of exposure to those PCBs, since that is what will inform us as to whether or not there are health concerns.

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Board of Education: Ben Allen • Oscar de la Torre • José Escarce • Maria Leon Vazquez • Laurie Lieberman • Ralph Mechur • Nimish Patel
Sandra Lyon, Superintendent

Please know that I understand and share your deep concern for your children's safety and that of all school employees. I know how difficult it is to make sense of the differing versions of the complex information you are receiving. The District will be sending information about testing results over the next few weeks in order to keep you informed.

Please feel free to visit the web page that the District has dedicated to providing everyone in the community with information regarding environmental concerns:

<http://www.smmusd.org/PublicNotices/Malibu.html>. We will continue to post updated information and data as it becomes available. Members of the public are encouraged to share their questions and concerns directly with Environ at SMMUSDEnvironmentalInput@environcorp.com.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Lyon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sandra Lyon
Superintendent
Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District